

AND WHOM HE CALLED THEM HE ALSO JUSTIFIED.

B. C. MOOMAW.

"How can a man be justified with God?" In one form or another, this question has stirred the deepest depths of the soul in all ages. No other has been asked with such universal unanimity, or profound anxiety. Philosophers, sages, prophets, theologians, idolatries hierarchies, all have addressed themselves to the answer of this question, and yet it is to-day, as it ever has been, and ever will be, the weightiest, the most vital known to the human consciousness. The universality of sin, and the interminable crop of sins which sin has brought forth, and is still bringing forth, gives point and significance to the question; and since every human heart knows the bitterness of this poison, and stands under the awful shadow of this death, the question of justification becomes an intensely personal one.

This fact is tremendously emphasized by a review of God's dealing with sin in the past ages, and the dreadful threatenings which he has laid up against the time to come. Witness the floods of misery in every shape and form which has made the world horrible; witness the special judgments which have filled the pages of history with a peculiar terror; witness the awful purpose of final judgment crouching in the dim mists of the future. No wonder that men have looked about them anxiously for means of escape. No wonder that they have inquired everywhere, of all oracles, for the satisfying answer.

"How shall a man be justified before God?" There is but one answer, the same in all ages: "By Righteousness." As sin is the law of death, righteousness is the law of life. But less than a perfect righteousness is of no avail, for "if a man keep the whole law, and offend in one point, he is guilty of all." How then can a man be saved by righteousness, for who of all the sons of men can keep the whole law and not offend in one point? The fact, however, that we can only be saved by a perfect righteousness is the ground of our hope, for a perfect righteousness has been provided for us in Christ, and we obtain it by faith. "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

In the giving of the law from Sinai, it was said, "He that doeth these things shall live by them." Christ kept the law to the last jot. We are familiar with the fact, so often, but not too often, the burden of sermons, that Christ died for us. But we should put equal emphasis upon the equally important and significant fact

that Christ lived for us. Why did he subject himself to the law, and keep it so perfectly, so that not even the eye of God could detect the slightest variation from it, or the slightest strain of transgression on his soul? It was because that under the law, none but a spotless sacrifice, "without spot or blemish," could be an acceptable sacrifice. As to any accountability to the law, or responsibility under the law, the Jewish sacrifices were innocent. Not being under the law they were innocent of transgression, and that made possible the symbolic idea of vicarious atonement, the innocent suffering for the guilty. But the Lamb of God was made responsible to the law, was put under the law, so that by obedience to it, a perfect obedience, he might achieve its righteousness. It was necessary for him also to be a spotless sacrifice, as pertaining to the law, so as to be an acceptable and efficient one.

But we have not yet reached the final analysis. Behind all this is yet a reason. Why was it that the spotless one, must, in addition to his heavenly and eternal righteousness, have the righteousness of the law? I say again, "He lived for us as truly as he died for us," and he wrought out the righteousness of the law for us that by faith in him the righteousness of the law might be set to our account, and constitute a title to justification. In the obedience of his life as well as the obedience of his death, he was our substitute under the law, both working out its righteousness and suffering its penalty for our sakes, in our stead, so that henceforth the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ is "unto all and upon all them that believe." Note particularly that it is the righteousness of God, and not the righteousness of a creature. Perfect obedience to the law by any creature would only result in a creature's righteousness. But when God assumes the righteousness of the law, when Jesus works out, through his perfect obedience, the righteousness of obedience, or the righteousness of a perfect life, the righteousness of a perfect man, it is more than a creature's righteousness, it is the righteousness of God. To the righteousness of his obedience he adds the righteousness of his divinity, and the latter being so much more glorious than the former, eclipses it, and therefore it is said that the righteousness of God *without* the law, (above or beyond the law) becomes ours by faith.

The righteousness of a perfect obedience would have given man an immortality in the flesh, but the righteousness of God, gives him an immortality in the heavenly places, clothed upon with the

heavenly or spiritual body. If Adam had rendered a perfect obedience, he would have retained immortal youth and spotless virtue, "a little lower than the angels," but those who receive by faith the righteousness of God, shall be as the angels, yea above the angels, for unto which of the angels hath he said, "Thou art my son."

In the very nature of things it is impossible that we should receive this righteousness by any other method than by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, for imputed righteousness is a gift of such vast magnitude, and of such infinite value, that it is beyond price, much more beyond the possibility of achievement by human works. Nevertheless, alongside of this imputed righteousness, and contemporaneous with it, is an IMPARTED righteousness, a righteousness of life, a holiness, a consecration or subjection of the will, a daily obedience of the Gospel wrought in us by the Holy Spirit; and this imparted righteousness is the fruit and evidence of the imputed righteousness, so that as a tree is justified by its fruit, the good fruit being evidence of a good tree, in like manner are we said to be justified by our works. It would be good for us, and especially for every minister of the Gospel to remember Rowland Hill's three R's. Ruin by the fall. Righteousness by faith. Righteousness by the Spirit." That is the Gospel, and there should never be a sermon without the three R's.

Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. A sentence of acquittal from him, once for all, ought to satisfy. Devils may accuse, as, strange to say, devils do, doubtless in their own proper shape, but often in human form, yet it is all in vain when leveled against those whom God has justified. The law may accuse, but they are dead to the law, they are dead to sin, the body of sin having died with Christ on the cross. They are no longer under the law; but under grace, and grace does not condemn. Grace pardons, redeems, justifies, saves.

CAN the true idea of man (the true moral idea) exist where the true idea of God is wanting? Undoubtedly it is possible that when the true idea of God exists and rules in a whole community, the true idea of man may exist and rule in individual cases, even when the true conception of God, or perhaps any conception of him what ever, is altogether wanting. But this can happen in no other instance.—*Rothe*.

DELIBERATE with caution, but act with decision, and yield with gracefulness, or oppose with firmness.